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MORE LAST WORDS

OF

DR. J O H N S O N.

CONSISTING OF

IMPORTANT AND VALUABLE ANECDOTES,

AND

A CURIOUS LETTER FROM A MEDICAL  
GENTLEMAN,

Now published, for the first time, from the Doctor's  
Manuscripts, with some original and interesting  
Stories of A PRIVATE NATURE, relative to that *great*  
*man*.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

Several singular and unaccountable Facts relative to his  
BIOGRAPHICAL EXECUTOR, formerly Chairman of  
the Quarter-Sessions.

By FRANCIS, BARBER.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR;

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also be had at the two Universities.

M,DCC,LXXXVII.

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MORE EAST WORDS

Dr. J. H. A. G. H.

THE following leaves I may venture

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of rational enjoyment to all lovers of

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but





## P R E F A C E.

**T**HE following leaves, I may venture to conjecture, will afford the greatest rational entertainment to all lovers of literary anecdote. They abound with passages of the most refined delicacy and elevated morality; passages which will animate the wavering Christian to the practice of all that is noble, and confirm the philosopher in the principles of his duty. I confess I cannot but feel some portion of vanity when I consider that for me was reserved the important task of disclosing to the public eye so brilliant a treasure. It is necessary to observe that I am not the late Dr. Johnson's black,  
but

but his white, servant. My name is Francis, and I had the honour of dressing his wig, and being admitted into his confidence. It is not vanity, but gratitude, which stimulates me to the performance of the present literary task. I would wish to endear the memory of my late master and friend to the world still more, if possible, than the tender Piozzi has done, or the liberal and erudite Sir John Hawkins. If I succeed I do justice to his name, and immortalize my own; if I fail, I only suffer what others have endured before me. A great man's death, perhaps, never till now inspired a biographical barber; but many instances have lately occurred to prove that it can call forth a barbarous biographer. May the information contained in the subsequent



quent pages exclude me from ever meriting that appellation !

Were I apprehensive that my name's being suffered to stand in the title page of the present production could, in any degree, injure the sale of the invaluable work which is soon expected from that learned gentleman, Francis Barber, the words should have been omitted. I am conscious that I have forestalled many anecdotes which he otherwise would have made known: so many, indeed, that, from the moment of this pamphlet's publication, he will be so incensed as to look black in the face ever afterwards. But this will be the anger of pride rather than reason ; for, be his materials ever so scanty, whatever proceeds

ceeds from such an hand cannot but force itself into public notice by its intrinsic merit; and, indeed, our names are not so similar as to delude the public into the idea that Mr. Francis, the barber, is Mr. Francis Barber, and thus impose the production of the former person upon them for that of the latter: or were this the case, the injurious effects of the present publication would be speedily counteracted by Mr. Francis Barber's distinguishing his own work by signing it with his mark.

M O R E



## MORE LAST WORDS, &c.

### P A R T I.

#### ANECDOTES OF DR. JOHNSON.

**N**OTHING is more gratifying to curiosity than anecdotes of great men. Hence the avidity with which the Johnsoniana of Messrs. Boswell and Piozzi have been perused ; an avidity which was almost equal to the importance of the productions. It was, no doubt, an extremely satisfactory piece of intelligence that the Doctor learned to box of his uncle Andrew ; nor can the public sufficiently recompense that man who first

B                      informed

informed them that the great Lexiphanes slept without a nightcap. The following anecdotes, which, some few excepted, are original, are equally important, and appear to me so valuable that I have dedicated the *first* part of this publication to their insertion; as I have the *second* to a very curious letter sent me by a medical gentleman who was in the habits of intimacy with the hero of these anecdotes; and who, perceiving that I was honoured with the Doctor's friendship, thought proper to cultivate my acquaintance; and has, by his kind offices, conciliated my respect and esteem.

Dr. Johnson was certainly the greatest man of his time, Mr. Bright, the Essex butcher,



butcher, excepted. But he was not more great than virtuous; for, though his whole talk was insult and traduction, it does not appear that he ever robbed a church, or, like his friend Baretti, was tried for his life. So far indeed from wishing to rob a church, he could not withhold his bitterest indignation if any man was profane enough to exert his diuretic faculty against a church-wall.

This excellent man was not contented with preaching the dictates of philosophy—he practised them; as the following anecdotes will prove.

One day when I observed to him that his wig was so far burnt, by too close a

B 2

contact

contact with the candle during his midnight vigils, as not to be worn with decency, he seemed going to fly into a passion; but, checking himself, he said, with great calmness, "then I must have another."

He shewed equal philosophical indifference one evening at the late Mr. Strahan's, where a large party had assembled to enjoy the pleasures of his instructive conversation, when letting a cup of tea fall upon his uncle, while abstracted in meditation, and being interrogated by the lady of the house whether he was hurt, he replied, "Not at all, Madam, not at all;" so punctually did his actions accord with his professions—so well did he practise



the philosophical lessons of **THE**  
**RAMBLER.**

For turning a compliment with elegance no man perhaps could equal Dr. Johnson, of which his behaviour at Mr. —'s table is an instance. Mr. —'s lady having declared, with regret, that her dinner was scanty and ill-dressed, which, by the bye, was both elegant and expensive, the Doctor replied, "*You lie, Madam,*" and fell to very heartily.

Of his extemporaneous productions, this is one—Seeing the quondam Mrs. Thrale point to the tankard one day at dinner, he exclaimed,

" Mrs.

" Mrs. Thrale

" Wants some ale."

This, it is true, was a mere levity; but it serves to shew the power of his genius, which was able instantaneously to dictate a stanza upon so trifling an occasion. However, after a momentary pause, he recited these lines upon the same subject, which the reader, I believe, will acknowledge to possess elegance and pathos:

" In this bright pot the brewer's nectar glows,

" And paints his face as ruddy as the rose ;

" Yet would the sweets of social converse fail

" Were this bright pot devoid of cheering ale.

" Unjoyous then its brightness all would view,

" Since those who saw it would detest it too.

" Thus, dull and irksome, thinking man shall find

" The loveliest Person unadorn'd with Mind."

Of his opinions, concerning the merits  
of



of literary productions, I recollect very few. The life of Jack Hickathrift he held in veneration, as affording an useful moral to mankind. "Sir," he would say, "you tell me that a boy like Jack cannot beat a giant; but you do not know what you say. Perseverance will do all things. I gained my literary reputation by perseverance."

Of the history of Tom Thumb, he thought that it was fabulous. "It may be true, or it may be not," said he one day to Mr. Steevens, who hinted his intention of publishing the work with notes. "If you assert that it is true, I call for a proof of its authenticity; yet I believe you will not find one in the British history,

tory, nor even in the British Museum." But let it not from hence be inferred that Dr. Johnson entertained a contemptuous opinion of Mr. Steevens's talents. He certainly held them in proper estimation, and has often seriously told me that he believed no author more capable than Mr. Steevens of writing a commentary on Tom Thumb.

Dr. Johnson was always hurt if a man of abilities degraded the dignity of his fellow-creatures, by contemptuous representations of human nature ; and for this reason Lord Monboddo was his constant aversion. " That man," he used to say, " is a walking paradox. He would make  
us



ns out of conceit with ourselves for reasons the most absurd. I shall expect, in his next volume of Ancient Metaphysics, that he will not be satisfied with preferring, like Rosseau, a state of nature to a state of civilization; but that, like Swift, he will impiously ridicule the very make and structure of the human species: that he will, with the folly, though not the wit, of Momus, wish that man had a window in his breast, in order that his secret councils might be discovered: that he will question the goodness of Providence in giving us two feet instead of four; and declare that our heads are nothing but excrescences from our bodies, and serve no other purpose but to hang our hats upon."

C

Mr.

Mr. Boswell has related, in his journey to the Hebrides, that he cannot hear a bagpipe played upon, without feeling emotions of enthusiasm which it is impossible to describe. This circumstance he once, unluckily, told Mrs. Piozzi, then Mrs. Thrale, who, mentioning it in conversation with the Doctor, made it a subject of ridicule, mischievously talked of having the martial sounds of that instrument conveyed to his ears in an unexpected moment, and begged to know what would be the nature of their effects. Incensed at her want of feeling, and her intention of sporting with the misfortunes of his friend, the Doctor replied, "Why, Madam, Bozzy would do that, upon hearing a bagpipe, which you often



often do without hearing one—he would p-ss himself. Read Shylock's speech on the power of sympathy, Madam, and you will see the matter explained in terms more elegant but not more veracious."

Dr. Johnson had an ingenuous frankness about him, when speaking even of his dearest friends, that was singularly pleasing. Thus, one day, he was haranguing a company, at Garrick's house, on the necessity of corporal punishments being inflicted at schools, and concluded his discourse by pointing to his *quondam* scholar, and saying, "Why, there is David now, for an example! He is by nature such a blockhead, that I was forced to flog every letter of the alphabet into him."

No person was ever a greater admirer of this celebrated man than Mrs. Macaulay, the historian, who, though of different political principles, was not, as Dr. Johnson declared, totally despicable. This lady was once crowned with laurel on her birth-day, (of which ceremony Sir John Hawkins copiously relates the particulars in his late publication,) and she returned the compliment by begging leave to kiss the Doctor's hand. "Madam," said the Doctor, "you are at liberty to kiss my *hand*, as a *woman*; but as a *whig*, you ought to think it an honour to be permitted to kiss my —."

Upon the publication of his *Tour to the Hebrides*, the editor of *Offian* was so irritated at the freedom with which the



the authenticity of his collection of that sublime poet's productions had been discussed, that he sent Dr. Johnson a short note, intimating his intention of caning him if he proceeded any farther in his inquiries upon that subject. Dr. Johnson wrote an answer, equally laconic, in the following words:

"S I R,

THE threats of a ruffian shall not prevent me from detecting the deceptions of an impostor.

SAM. JOHNSON."

Dr. Johnson's talents for religious controversy cannot be doubted; but a proof of the strength of argument by which he

he could enforce his opinion, may not be unacceptable. Discourfing in company one day on the fubject of the Trinity as delivered in the Athanafian creed, fome doubts were ftarted by feveral perfons prefent, which were not the moft favourable to a doctrine fo obvious and rational. Dr. Johnson declaimed againft fuch profaneneff. This fcepticifm, however, was attempted to be fupported by reafons, of which the Doctor proved the fallacy by rifing up, clenching his fift, and declaring that “ if any perfon dared offer a doubt upon the fubject, he *would knock him down.*” This was dealing in arguments of the moft forcible nature, which could not but apply themfelves to the *fenfes*, and which would, no doubt, have



have been more efficacious in controverting the opinions of Soame Jenyns than all the reasoning and ridicule so happily bestowed in the *Remarks on the Origin of Evil*.—This anecdote I had of Dr. H—p—n, who had it of Dr. Kenrick, who was present at the time of its occurrence.

Dr. Johnson's tenderness to the fair sex is well known; but in no instance is it more conspicuous than the following: At Burton upon Trent, while he was considered merely as a young man of ingenuity, he visited Mr. ———, an apothecary, who had the good fortune of being in possession of an amiable and lovely daughter. The Doctor and she  
were

were often engaged in literary and instructive conversations; but at one time she happened to differ from him in some point or other, and unluckily offered several arguments so powerful as to render it almost impossible for her not to be victorious in the dispute. The Doctor, however, with that delicacy which was so congenial to his disposition, and that address which marks only a man of superior genius, seized her arm, and, gripping it with great force, occasioned a violent scream, and a flood of tears, from the lady. Her father, alarmed at the noise, ran down stairs, learnt from her the story, and remonstrated with the Doctor, who, with the greatest good-nature, rolled his head about, and laughed heartily



heartily at this instance of female weakness and folly.

One evening Mr. Boswell was talking of the fame and antiquity of his family, when Dr. Johnson appeared to listen with great gravity. Flattered by such a mark of attention, he declared that his ancestors had been the greatest warriors in all Scotland. Upon this, the Doctor placed his hands upon the arms of his chair, and, rising about three inches from his seat, fulminated a loud crepitation from behind. The risibility of the whole company was excited, when Boswell exclaimed, "Your voice, Sir, is celestial, and you smell like an angel;" to which

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the great Lexiphanes replied by repeating, from Midas,

" When he speaks,  
" Thunder breaks;"

and burst into an hearty fit of laughter.



## MORE LAST WORDS, &c.

### P A R T II.

**I** HAVE divided this publication into two parts, that the reader may be enabled, at a proper moment, to pause and recollect what he has read; as, by revolving it in his mind, he will impress on his memory that which ought never to be forgotten. All the anecdotes with which I was myself acquainted, I have inserted in the first part; the second I shall dedicate to the letter of a medical gentleman who was in the habits of intimacy with Dr. Johnson; and who, the

reader will observe, was not his friend without acquiring that knowledge which may always be reaped from the acquaintance of men of abilities.

To            FRANCIS, Esq.

HONOURED SIR,

AS I hear that you are about to publish a collection of Johnsoniana, the present letter, I trust, will not be unwelcome, as it is written for the purpose of imparting several valuable particulars respecting that great literary character; particulars which you are at liberty to make public, either collectively or in part, as your own good sense and judgment shall suggest.

You



You well know the laudable attention I have ever paid to medicine. I have suffered no part of nature to escape me, however low, which could improve my stock of knowledge. For this reason, while I have been busied in the sublimest physical researches, I have not thought it beneath me to inspect the water-closets of the learned. Such a custom may be ridiculed by the superficial, but the sensible and erudite will applaud that curiosity which looks into the *bottom* of things, and which must of course be *fundamentally* learned. The multitude, who judge without reflection, may despise me. It is to the *few* I write, who approve things pleasing less than *necessary* things.

By

By such a practice, I have often acquired a knowledge of valuable literary anecdotes; and doubt not that Sir John Hawkins gathered the important materials of his lately-published biography from the same store. This I judge from the nature of his book, which, I have heard many persons say, *smells rank* of malignity; (by using such a word as malignity they only indulge their envy); and which I have myself observed to display great *depth* of research. To what else can several people have alluded, when, upon reading his attacks on Richardson, Sterne, Fielding, &c. &c. they exclaimed that he was a *dirty fellow*, and that to attract the public attention by such means was pitiful and *naughty*? My  
 opinion



opinion is, indeed, confirmed by recollecting that I have seen the prediction of some philosophers verified, viz. *that all things which now owe their shape to mixture and alteration shall return to their first state*; for, in the houses-of-office of my friends and acquaintance, I generally see several leaves of Sir John's book deposited on the shelves as offerings to Cloacina; and have been repeatedly obliged to commit such knowledge to the place from whence, as I conjecture, it originally came.

In making the above remarks, it is by no means my intention to derogate from the acknowledged merit of that great biographer.

biographer. I have myself learned much by these examinations; and, by the practice of a variety of experiments, and an habit of deep reflection, have at last discovered, by the size and formation, what excrements have fallen from learned men; and, by the taste and colour, in what species of learning those men excelled. Thus profound and erudite authors generally emit long and sturdy ones, somewhat in the shape of nine-pins; and these are either perfect or broken as their compositions are regular or unequal, and rugged or smooth according to the asperity or courtliness of their style. Johnson's, which was large, but to appearance evacuated with great labour,



labour, was surrounded with protuberances, like a cucumber or a pomegranate; so was Swift's. Pope's was extremely uniform and elegant in its structure, with some appearance, indeed, of internal roughness; but Shenstone's was as polished, as delicate, and as mournful, as a roll of the most elegant black sealing-wax.

Speaking of Shenstone reminds me of an anecdote which neither Doddsley nor Johnson have mentioned in his life, but with which I became acquainted from my custom of inspecting all that appertains to an house-of-office: an house which has afforded me the greatest li-

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terary

terary knowledge ; not more from diving with no unhallowed hands into its sacred merdicular abyfs, than from perufing the various infcriptions on its walls and windows.

Spence was often with Shenstone at the Leafowes, where they repeatedly faw Baskerville, the famous printer ; a gentleman with whom for many years they had been united in the bonds of friendship. One time, when they had dined at Baskerville's, neceffity drove them into his Chapel of Eafe, againft the wall of which, for the fake of exciting fome innocent mirth, they wrote the following :

Whoever



Whoever says he knows a letter  
 As good as Baskerville's, or better,  
 Is fit for nought but to catch roaches\*,  
 Or grease the axletrees of coaches.

JOE. SPENCE,  
 WILL. SHENSTONE.

Baskerville, contrary to expectation,  
 as well as intention, was irritated at the  
*jeu d'esprit*, and wrote under it these  
 lines :

Vain wretch, that doth profane the name of Spence,  
 Or Shenstone too, with such lame, far-fetch'd sense,  
 Whose tuneful lays, whose soft melodious song,  
 "Like purling waters, gently glide along;"  
 Can he—with straining hard,—such lines heave out,  
 To prove, by argument, a roach no trout?  
 Can he, in doggrel, good plain-taste, reproach,  
 Forget the proverb too—sound as a roach?

\* This alludes to Mr. Baskerville's passion for  
 catching this fish.

No, 'tis not he! the forg'ry plain appears,  
 The lion's skin can't hide the ass's ears:  
 Friend Spence, then, when next thou com'st to me—  
 Go on with that, thy talent's not to write

J. BASKERVILLE.

Baskerville would not for a considerable time after this deign to speak to, or visit, either Spence or Shenstone; and many satires were written in resentment, by these poets, on "the printing fisherman." Thus was a friendship, which had subsisted so long, destroyed by writing in an house of office; and this anecdote may prove the importance of my inquiries. Those who doubt my veracity, may be cleared from their suspicions by calling at the house of Mr. Baskerville's widow;



in Birmingham, where they may see the original lines, which I have here quoted, and learn the particulars of the story, as I have here related them, from Mrs. Baskerville herself.

Since I am on the subject of illustrating the private characters of eminent personages, it may prove no unimportant task to relate an interesting particular respecting the late Mrs. Baddely. This lady being afflicted with a disorder which I have not the indelicacy to mention, (yet, lest the suppression of its name should lead you to entertain suspicions injurious to her character, I confess, with blushes, that it was *costiveness*), was obliged to have recourse to Dr. Glover,

ver, a medical gentleman, well remembered in the convivial world. He prescribed her a cathartic potion, and called soon afterwards to learn whether her disorder still continued? "No, Sir," replied this amiable actress, pointing to a certain utensil, vulgarly called the close-stool, but more delicately denominated, by an epicure of my acquaintance, the *pudding-pan*;—"No Sir," said this amiable actress, "for, if you will look in *there*, you will see that I have *done* it almost full." The Doctor stared at the innocent ingenuousness with which she answered his question. Construing this into the astonishment of incredulity, she addressed herself, with a voice of earnestness, to Webster, who then kept her, with "M  
 dear,



dear, is it not true? Did not I do it almost full?" Oh, yes," replied Webster, "quite full, I saw it run over."

The anecdote I had from Dr. Glover himself; and my sole end in thus relating it, is to convince you how much knowledge of this nature I have accumulated, at the same time that I strengthen your intellects, improve your morals, and render your heart susceptible of every elegant impression. This anecdote, it is true, has not been inserted in Mrs. Steele's Memoirs of her deceased friend, and therefore I fear that your giving it publication may lead the world to imagine that I would prejudice them against that instructive work, by acquainting them

them with what its fair author has omitted, and thus implying that it is imperfect. But I disclaim so malignant an intention. Too great is my estimation of the chaste and amiable virtues of her character, for me to think of giving her delicate mind a moment's uneasiness; and too great my reverence for her brilliant literary talents for me to attempt to blast the laurels that are twined around her temples by Diana and Apollo.

But I find that I am imperceptibly losing sight of my great object. My original intention in writing this epistle was to have given you an account of some important particulars relative to Dr. Johnson, and of some valuable writings



ings discovered in his temple of Cloacina after his death, and I have imperceptibly glided into subjects which are by no means analogous. It is almost impossible to read the works of any great writer, without infusing much of his manner into our own style; and the attention which I have paid to the biographical lucubrations of Sir John Hawkins, has infected me with a habit of digression. This peculiarity, however, is by no means to be imitated; since, though it be converted by him into a beauty, it becomes a blemish in the hands of an inferior writer. Let me therefore return to my original subject.

F

After

After Dr. Johnson had paid the water-closets and chapels of ease a visit, it was my custom to inspect them, for the purpose of collecting such manuscripts as the indolence of his genius might be *backwards* in displaying ; and I have thus attained to a greater knowledge of his abilities and character, than all that Sir John himself has ever told the public. I have met with innumerable papers, valuable for their merit, which I shall soon publish, and which will prove the great regard the Doctor entertained for his learned friends Sir John Hawkins, Mr. Boswell, and Mrs. Piozzi. I have, likewise, by accurately investigating the nature and properties of the digested food there



there deposited by the Doctor, acquired no small degree of additional skill in my profession ; for it has enabled me to discover that pills made out of the excrements of a man of genius, are of great efficacy towards dispelling the fumes of indigestion or melancholy, rendering the imagination brilliant, and clarifying the conceptions of the mind. To account for this effect is an easy matter : the spirits, which are of a more than usually refined nature in a man of genius, pervade his corporeal substance, and, entering all parts of his body, impregnate his dung with their exquisite quality. The dung given to another person, either as a bolus, an unction, or a pill, causes him to imbibe the genius into his own frame by

absorption; and, for this reason, I have often, when my literary patients have complained of dulness or languor, prescribed to them three pills to be swallowed of a morning fasting; or if they disliked the substance in this form, to take the peruke from their head and rub their scull with a piece of it about the size of a walnut. This last method may perhaps be the most proper, since it is not only more pleasing to those who dislike all that bears the appearance of physic, but more likely to penetrate into, and impregnate with its spirit, those parts which are chiefly requisite to operate in works of genius—the brain, and all the region of the senses.

I was



I was encouraged to proceed in these merdico-medical inquiries by Dr. Johnson himself, who, one day, at dinner, declared before a large company, whose conversation happened to turn upon posthumous works, that, by such means, many pleasing compositions might be obtained. I then modestly confessed to him that I had, for a long time past, clandestinely made it a practice to cultivate such examinations, but that I had hitherto been ashamed to let him know the circumstance, lest he should treat me with derision; to which he replied "Not at all, Sir; some distinction I shall ever make between necessary and wanton nastiness; between nastiness that has no other end than to gratify folly, or disgust elegance,

and

that which is submitted to as the means either of producing future cleanliness, or of promoting useful knowledge. Swift would treat your researches as ridiculous. He would ironically compliment you on exploring *the secrets of the boary deep*. But Swift, it must be remembered, was a filthy fellow." So saying, this great man broke wind backwards three several times with great force and energy; upon which, I could observe, several ladies gave the servants those plates that they had not half emptied, and ceased regaling themselves with the luxuries of that dinner, which they had scarcely began. Such was the attention Dr. Johnson's conversation could inspire, that corporeal wants were neglected to be satisfied,



fied, while he had an opportunity of  
affording a more noble repast for the  
mind.

Yet it is certain, that though Dr.  
Johnson encouraged me to prosecute  
these inquiries, he was not pleased when  
I informed him that they had been  
chiefly carried on in *his* water-closet:  
for this reason I was particularly cau-  
tious of concealing from his knowledge  
that I had thence extracted several writ-  
ings of his own composition, that he  
had never given to the public. It makes  
me smile to think with what secrecy he  
frequented that place of unavoidable re-  
sort, in order to prevent me from enter-  
ing it after his departure. Yet notwith-

standing

standing all this, notwithstanding he sometimes used brown paper, and burned that on which he had himself written, I still obtained several productions that he had before, and, through forgetfulness, afterwards, used. Sometimes indeed, when I took great pains to discover these literary treasures, I was disappointed, but in no instance more than the following :

One morning we were taking a walk a few miles from London, when the Doctor bade me retire at some distance. I did so, yet was not far enough off but that I could discern his actions ; and, in order to see better what he was doing, I drew from my pocket my telescope.



telescope. With the assistance of this instrument I plainly observed the Doctor unbutton his breeches, and, if I may use the expression, stand in a sitting posture behind the hedge, for the laudable purpose of easing nature. I observed there was a great mole on the right cheek of his posteriors, which were very large; a circumstance that Mrs. Piozzi, who ought to know the fact, has neglected to make public. The sight was extremely sublime, and inspired me with emotions of awe and admiration, similar to those which I feel upon the perusal of Milton's *Il Penseroso*, or the *Inferno* of Dante. The e-----ts he discharged were suitable to the description I have given on a former  
 G occasion;

occasion ; — in appearance not unlike a Bologna sausage, with some degree of asperity on the surface. He wiped himself with a large piece of paper, buttoned his breeches, directed his course towards me, and I accompanied him home.

The moment I parted with him, I hastened to the place where he had left his offerings to Cloacina, that I might see whether the paper, with which he had mundified his posteriors, was a manuscript. My wish was gratified ; it *was* a manuscript, and of his own writing. I hurried it into my pocket, and having to dine with Mr. Boswell that afternoon, walked instantly to his house, boasted



boasted of my good fortune, and, to prove my great regard for that gentleman, begged his acceptance of so inestimable an acquisition. Mr. Boswell thanked me in terms of the greatest politeness, for what he was pleased to call my unexampled generosity, and endeavoured to make out the words. Finding his attempts vain, he conceived that if the paper were dried, he should be able to scrape off the yellow pellicle, and decypher the whole. For this purpose, he ordered it to be hung before the kitchen fire; but unfortunately the cook, ignorant of its value, skewered it round a joint of meat that was then roasting. Much company had been invited to dinner, and this literary *morceau* became the subject of

Mr. Boswell's conversation, who, conjecturing that the paper must by now have been perfectly dried, sent up for it. It could not be found, and the cook was charged with having either destroyed it, or used it for some purpose or other. This she persisted to deny, and would have passed undetected in her criminal neglect, had not the truth been providentially discovered by a young lady's being seen to lay something like skin on the side of her plate, that she had attempted to chew in vain, that, on examination, proved by several legible words to be the very paper from which so much entertainment had been expected, and which the cook, through carelessness, had sent up in part to table.

and

Such



Such is the folly of the wicked, that, at the very moment they act basely, they commit some neglect or other which furnishes means for the discovery of their crime!

The colour of the paper likewise proved it's authenticity. The taste Miss            observed was rather strong in her mouth; but the cook persisted in saying that both the taste and colour arose from the gravy of the meat. This might indeed be said of the *colour*; but we *tasted* it all round, and it felt to the palate much more bitter than gravy. Mr. Boswell was enraged, dismissed his cook at a moment's warning, and scarcely spoke a word during the remainder of

Such

the

the day. The company likewise were not in good spirits at their disappointment. Thus was a day's pleasure destroyed by the ignorance of a cook, whose folly deprived us of that pure gratification which we should have received from the perusal of what had perhaps never yet been printed, and what from the Doctor's posteriors might have been handed down to his posterity!

Yet to convince you that I have not always been thus disappointed, I shall conclude my letter by laying before you one or two specimens of the literary acquisitions I have obtained in the course of my examinations into Dr. Johnson's little recess. It were a vain task to talk  
of



of letting you have all, or even the twentieth part of these acquisitions, because the number is so great that I think proper to print them as a work by itself, and upon the appearance of the thirtieth edition of your valuable pamphlet, I shall deliver them instantly to the press for the purpose of gratifying the expectations and the wishes of the world by a publication of them in six folio volumes.

Yet to convince you that I have not always been thus disappointed, I shall conclude my letter by laying before you one or two specimens of the literary acquisitions I have obtained in the course of my examinations into Dr. Johnson's

SPECIMENS

SPECIMENS

Of the Literary Treasures extracted from  
Dr. Johnson's Water-closet.

MATERIALS FOR MY OWN LIFE.

"HOW I, Sir John Hawkins, knight  
and justice of the peace, write my life,  
in order to prevent the mistakes of  
those who may, upon my decease, be-  
come my biographers. This life will  
chiefly consist of the fullest account yet  
made public of my literary cotemporaries.

"How my mother, some little time  
before my birth, dreamed that she was  
brought to bed of an owl. How my fa-  
ther laughed at her the next morning.

How



How her dream was repeated, with this addition—that the owl pecked at a dead eagle, and would have devoured it, had it not been frightened away by some unlucky schoolboys pelting it with stones, bricks, wood, and divers other things. How she was extremely troubled thereat.

“How, on the third night, she again dreamed that she was brought to bed of an owl that played upon the fiddle. How she consulted a cunning woman on the occasion, who predicted my future literary and musical greatness.

“How her great joy, in consequence thereof, accelerated my birth. How the nurses rejoiced. How my nativity was

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cast,

-cast, and Saturn found to be in the ascendant. How it was therefrom predicted that I should be a man of great gravity and importance. How my father was enraged at hearing the affair, and frightened the nurse, who let me fall with my head against the hearth. How the hearth was broken, but my head unhurt. How a doctor was sent for, and I cried at the sight, and presently dropped into a doze.

“Of the pranks of my childhood, after I could walk, particularly in making a set of state trials, and several other valuable books in my father's library, imperfect, by tearing the leaves out for a purpose which shall be nameless; how this practice



practice was discovered, and how my father tired both his arms, and wore out a large rod, in chastising the offending parts; and how he cried because he could not make me shed a tear, or discover any signs of contrition.

“ How I was very mischievous and malicious, but never laughed; and how I was obliged to be sent to school.

“ Of my school ingenuity, how I used to tell tales of my schoolfellows to the usher and master, and how I used to complain to my schoolfellows of the tyranny of their governors. How I was very fond of pudding; and used to doze whilst I was saying my lesson.

“ How our master, in order to im-

prove us in the arts of eloquence and composition, used to give us a theme to harangue upon, before an assembly of the whole school. How My speech consisted of personal abuse against my School-fellows. How I censured one of them who had often assisted me in doing my exercise for his stupidity and injustice; and how he contradicted the truth of my assertion, by getting out of his place and beating me well. How I cried out, but neither the master nor the ushers could hear me, as they had dropped to sleep.

“ How I was soon taken from school; how I became painful to my parents, from what they ridiculously termed my insolence; and how I was sent away from their house, and their lands, tenants,



nants, goods, and chattels thereunto appertaining, and bound clerk to an attorney, before an assembly, whose speech consisted in—  
 “How I saw an attorney take a cause in hand, *gratis*, of a man who had been infinitely injured, but could not afford to pay the proper fees, though his family would be ruined if the cause were not brought forward. How I despised the attorney for his idiotism in affairs of the world.

“How I read Addison’s Spectator, and was much offended at his drawing such characters as Sir Roger de Coverley, Capt. Sentry, and Will Honeycomb. How it appeared evident that he had an intention to sap the foundations of morality thereby.

by. How a lady asked me what I had read? and how I told her. How she asked me if I was not pleased with Sir Roger? and how I was shocked at her indecency.

“How I was unwilling to conceal my talents from the world, and engaged to write essays in an evening paper. How I was soon turned off, and how I observed that the paper grew extremely dull directly after.

“How Fielding, Richardson, Goldsmith, and Dr. Hawkesworth, pestered the town with novels, eastern romances, and such nonsense. How I therefore thought that they all had entered into a design



design to destroy the innocence and happiness of mankind by their writings, and how I became certain of this, from hearing that they had several times dined together.

“ How I took much to reading Pope, Swift, and Addison; how I found my mind grow tumid thereby, and feared I should be obliged, like Doctor Johnson, to write such papers as the *Ramblers*. How I was much vexed thereat, and applied myself to Blackmore, Pomfret, Sternhold and Hopkins, and Tate and Brady, and how I was much edified thereby.

“ Of my great knowledge of music;  
of

of my judgment in the science being exemplified by my decisions on several rising performers, both vocal and instrumental, particularly in holding the abilities of Harrison in contempt. Of my musical publication, and how successfully I disposed of my work, by asking my friends if they had seen it; and, when they replied in the negative, promising to send them a set. How they thanked me thereupon; and how, soon after having sent them one, I called upon them for the money.

“ Of my acquaintance with Dr. Johnson, and my *mistakes* in thoughtlessly taking away his cane, and one of his manuscripts. How it was odd enough that  
I should



I should by mistake lay my hand upon that cane only which had a gold head, and that MS. which was considered to contain much valuable information ; with a few remarks on the propensity of great men to be forgetful, and commit errors through carelessness, which those who do not know their weakness might naturally attribute to premeditated design.

“ How I have forgot to mention my being made a justice of peace. How I saw Midas one night at the theatre, and was incensed to observe such an insult offered to the dignity of justices of the peace, by making Midas one, and, at the same time, painting him a ridiculous character.

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“ How

"How I meditated on Midas when I came home, and was terrified, lest, as some of the characters in the piece are heathen gods and goddesses, it should corrupt the religion of the country, and infect the audience with polytheism.

"How I went the next night to see Venice Preserved, and was much offended thereat. Pierro, who is one of the characters, forms a plot to ruin all the justices of the peace in Venice. This is, as I have somewhere read, *sudere cum lacris*. I was pleased, however, to see poetical justice done at last; for a Mr. Jaffier lodged an information against him, and a *mittimus* was instantly made out for Pierro.

"How



“How I saw the Conscious Lovers of Steele performed on one of the hot-beds of vice, and was disgusted with the dull and insipid stuff of Bevil, Myrtle, and Indiana; and how a pantomime succeeded, by which I was much entertained.

“How I slept upon my back, and dreamed of Harlequin cutting the taylor’s head off, and woke in a fright.

“How I read Swift’s proposal to the people of Ireland for lightening their distress and poverty, by eating the poor children of the kingdom; how I was shocked at the barbarity of the idea.

“How I read his Advice to Servants, and was astonished that he should seriously

tionally think it their duty to act as he counsels them.

"How I caught cold one day by walking over Black Friars Bridge, and how I took care of myself thereupon, and got well again.

"How I behaved with such conscious dignity, or, as ignorant people called it, insolence, to every body, when I was CHAIRMAN OF THE QUARTER SESSIONS, that they joined unanimously in procuring my dismissal.

"How I gave a feeble old beggar an halfpenny one afternoon, and how he bought a glass of gin therewith. How I was so incensed at his impudence and wickedness as to knock the gin out of

his



his trembling hand, and prevent his getting any more money, by standing by him till dusk; and how going home the thoughts of the beggar's scandalous conduct ran so in my head, as to give rise to a great many deep and sensible reflections on the unfeeling nature of mankind.

“How I had a pain in my bowels after *dissipating* a whole night with an eminent female author; concerning the particulars of which see my biography of Dr. Johnson; and how, like the swain of Gay, I was in doubt whether it was love or the bellyache. How I was obliged hastily to retire into the back-yard, and thereby convinced that it was only the bellyache. How the anxiety of my mind was much eased thereat.

“How

“ How \* \* \* \* \*

It was with great difficulty that I could discover, through the brown shade of the paper, the above words ; but what follows is totally unintelligible. How so valuable a paper could become the inhabitant of the place from whence I obtained it, may afford much matter for curious speculation. It could hardly have been deposited there by Sir John Hawkins himself. By whose hand then could it have been committed as an offering to the goddess of the yellow-robe ?

The following is obviously the production of Dr. Johnson.



“ Of the authors who have embittered the happiness of life by the pernicious tendency of their writings, none are more atrocious than those who have taught us to be discontented with our present condition, by unreasonable murmurs at the dispensations of Providence, and partial descriptions of the sufferings of mankind.

“ How men could be found so weak and wicked as to teach us to repine at a situation which, however miserable, we are ordained to suffer, is not easy to be conceived; but it is certain that writers have existed whose aim has been to pervert the end for which their abilities were given them, and disseminate corruption, when it was their duty to have promoted amendment; that, instead of improving

improving our knowledge, and elevating our virtue, they have dwelt with malignant pleasure on the degradation of human nature; and that they have called in to their assistance all the radiance of wit and strength of ratiocination in order to support tenets which could be expected to proceed only from pertinacious ignorance or desperate impiety.

“ Those who indulge themselves in declamations on the turpitude of mankind, are not unuseful members of society; and the misanthrope, though his representations of human baseness impress us with gloomy and dreadful ideas, is not destructive to the interests of virtue, because the horror he excites originates from a detestation of moral depravity;



pravity; but the wretches who depreciate the structure of the human frame, and ridicule the common offices required by nature, have no apology to offer: they rebel against conviction and rationality; censure what ought to inspire them with admiration and reverence, and add ingratitude to folly.

What were their motives for such nefarious conduct, is beneath the dignity of the present subject to inquire; but perhaps, notwithstanding the contempt with which they affect to view human nature, they are not themselves superior to the rest of mankind, either in constitution or temper, but subject to the same desires and the same aversions; stimulated by

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the same hope, alarmed by the same fear, distracted by passions, and distressed by necessities.

“ Of all the subjects at which these men have levelled the shafts of jocular satire, none has grown more stale by frequent repetition, than an house of office; an house, which may surely claim some distinction, as it has ever been the resort of the greatest poets and rhetoricians, philosophers, and divines. There they direct our attention, if we would learn humility, and affect to laugh at our ideas of human importance, by reminding us how ludicrous human importance appears when painfully relieving the necessities



necessities of nature. But it cannot easily be proved that there is any cause to blush for what is unavoidable, or to consider that as a degradation which is universally required from mankind.

“ Yet perhaps these intimations may not be wholly without advantage ; for though they render the ignorant more obstinate, and the discontented more ungrateful, they may serve as useful lessons to the sage, and teach him to check the vanity of human wishes.

“ It is the advice of Claudian, to those who would cure themselves of an hopeless passion, to conceive the grimaces and

contemptible situation of their mistress, when easing the necessities of nature; and perhaps were the slaves of vain hopes and ambitious desires to take an imaginary view of his state when seated in the house-of-office, he would elevate his hopes to nobler prospects than the admiration of mortals, and be convinced of the despicable inanity of human pride. By such a retrospection, beauty might learn to despise the folly of her conquests : and some hopes might be entertained that tyranny, power, and riches, would be drawn back from their presumptuous ideas of superior worth, to remember that they are not above the level of mankind ; that they are obliged to perform the



the vilest offices, even of the brute creation ; and that they cannot rationally expect a greater degree of dignity than the rest of their fellow creatures, unless they practise a greater degree of virtue."

Such, Sir, are the specimens of my literary treasures! such is the knowledge my researches into the grand cave of Cloacina have obtained!

In writing on so tender a subject, I congratulate myself on having used no expression that can convey an indelicate idea. If I *had*, however, I trust an apology is unnecessary, for my sole aim has been to inform and improve; and  
therefore

therefore you might say to me, what I heard judiciously said to an amiable and fashionable young lady of my acquaintance. Not conceiving that I was near her, as she was in converse with a female friend, on some moral or literary topic, she happened to let fly a terrible rowzer; for which she politely exclaimed, "I beg your pardon, madam!"—"Pray do not make an apology," replied the other, "there ought not to be any ceremony between us."

If you think proper to publish this letter, I request that you will omit my name; for the importance of what I have communicated is so great, that  
I am



( 79 )

I am certain it would cause much envy  
and create me many enemies.

I remain,

My dear Francis,

Your humble Servant,

\* \* \* \* \*





